



Imperial Press Delegates

Program

Thursday, August 19, 1920

GIVEN BY

*The Gleichen Board of Trade
Gleichen, Alberta*

PROGRAM

8:55 A.M.—Welcome to our Guests by A. R. Tudhope (Mayor); Chief Yellow Horse, Chief of the Blackfoot Indian Reserve; George R. Matthews, President of the Gleichen Board of Trade; and W. Park Evans, Gleichen Press Representative.

9.00 A.M.—Automobile drive for one hour.

10.00 A.M.—Viscount Burnham to be made a Chief of the Blackfoot Indians.

10.25 A.M.—Leave Indian Encampment, and take autos to grand-stand for stampede.

10.30 A.M.—Stampede:

1. Wild Horse Race
2. Indian Race
3. Steer Roping
4. Relay Race
5. Wild Steer Riding
6. Squaw Race
7. Maverick Race
8. Cowboy Race
9. Bucking Contest—
Exhibition Riding by World's Champion Rider
10. Indian Race
11. Bareback Bucking

11.45 A.M.—One long whistle from the engines, at which time leave the grand-stand and take autos to return to station.

11.50 A.M.—Autos leave, accompanied by Indians, Cowboys, etc.

12.10 P.M.—Address by Viscount Burnham.

12.15 P.M.—First section leaves.

12.15 to 12.45—Addresses by guests.

12.45 P.M.—Second section leaves.

Good Bye and Good Luck, Imperial Press.

The Gleichen District Fifty Years Ago



THE BLACKFEET Then and Now



(By the REV. CANON STOCKEN)



What is now known as the Gleichen district was once part of the original home of the Blackfeet. By the irony of fate a portion only of the district (widely known as the Blackfoot Reserve) is now their home.

Fifty years ago the Blackfoot proper roamed over the whole of the lands which lie between the Foothills on the west and the Cypress Hills on the east; with the big Saskatchewan river to the north and the plains of Montana to the south.

For many years before present memory, the Blackfeet ranged themselves under three particular chiefs, and became known as the North, the South and the Middle Blackfeet. The North Blackfeet hunted north of the Red Deer river; the Middle Blackfeet between the latter and the Bow; and the South Blackfeet, mixing with their near relatives, the Bloods and Peigans, roamed the extensive country south of the Bow river. The three huge bands appear to have lived in harmony always, and to have met periodically for such occasions as the Sun-dance. The centralness of their present location led to its being often the scene of such gatherings. When in recent years the Blackfeet settled on their present reserve, the North Blackfeet took the west end, under the chieftainship of Na-to-sa-pi ("Old-Sun"); the South Blackfeet occupied the east end, under the head-chief Sa-po-ma-ksi-ko ("Crowfoot"); and the Middle Blackfeet took up their position between the two, under the chieftainship of Ma-ko-yo-wai-yis-tsi ("Wolf-Carrier"). From this incident, it would appear, the two ends of the Reserve became known respectively as the North and South Camps.

Fifty years ago life among the Blackfeet was very different from what we see to-day. In almost every way their position then was better than now.

For a primitive people, their physical and hygienic conditions were excellent. They were always active, and had a high sense of the value of physical development. They disciplined themselves in order to become hardy. The men wore very little clothing, and bathed in the creeks and rivers daily, not only in summertime, but far into the winter. The young men took long excursions on foot, even in the coldest weather, and proved themselves exceedingly fleet of foot on such occasions.

In summertime they arose at break of day, and retired, as a rule, at dusk. In winter the camp fires burnt late in their teepees. Neither the men nor the women married early in life. The marriage of boys and girls was almost unheard of. Very severe was their unwritten moral code. The one big blotch on the escutcheon of those days was the position of the women. She was as much a chattel of her husband, or father, or brother as his horses! It was rarely that any affection existed between husband and wife. A long married life sometimes discovered it. It was not uncommon for a wife to take her husband's life. The life of the women was a hard one. Not only the cutting up of the buffalo—which formed their staple food—and the cooking generally, but the hunting for favorite roots, which were eaten regularly, fell to her lot. They also chopped the firewood and hauled the water. They erected the tents and took them down as required, and that was no light task, for there were never fewer than five, and sometimes as many as thirty dressed buffalo hides in the one tent or tepee. They packed these on the backs of their ponies. A big teepee would be carried in sections. It was one of the healthiest forms of dwelling ever invented. It was warm, perfectly ventilated, and easily taken down and removed, which ensured sanitary conditions. In those days there was no overcrowding. Hides were plentiful, and some of the leading men had ten or a dozen teepees in use at one time. A great hunter or warrior had many followers or admirers, and he provided for their entertainment. In such cases polygamy was common.

The most common feature of the life of those days was the buffalo hunt. Existence depended upon it. It sometimes happened during severe winters that the course of the buffalo was changed, and the Blackfeet hunted in vain for it;

and hundreds of the Red men died from hunger and exposure. Such a calamity befel them about the time of which we are speaking.

One of the most common ways of hunting the buffalo was for a goodly party of hunters to go in search of them and skilfully herd them towards a favorite Piskan or chute, which had been carefully prepared during the preceding winter. The chute was built on the edge of a sheer cut bank (one such, used regularly, lies to the west of our town), and was constructed of green logs (in a way very similar to the building of a corral); the whole was camouflaged to look like a bit of brush, and with a gradually rising and projecting platform, which hid from view the ravine below, and precipitated the buffalo on to the rocky ground beneath. After the introduction of fire-arms—perhaps one should say, after the passing of the old flint-lock gun, the use of the piskan or chute was discontinued, and the Indian hunter was not afraid to tackle these powerful brutes alone. Of course there were always men who were sure of their prowess and were ready at any time to do battle with the buffalo single-handed. The hunters always took their families with them on these occasions, and left the encampment at a safe distance from the piskan or fray. Immediately after the killing, the women took possession of the prey, skinning, cutting up and packing for the return to the general encampment.

It should be added that though the buffalo was to the Indian what roast beef is to "John Bull," he, like him, lived on many other things; e.g.: fish, fowl, venison, roots, herbs and berries; but, unlike "John Bull," he flourished and gained his abnormally fine physique with the aid of no other beverage than pure water. He knew of no other until the white-man introduced his fire-water.

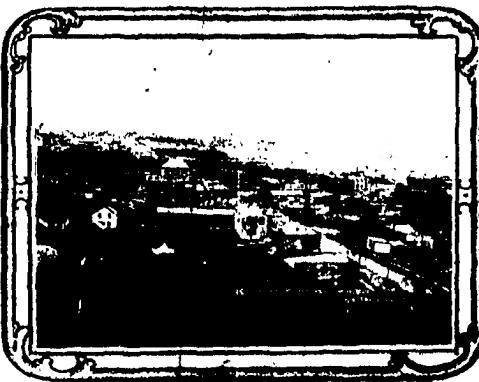
Unlike other peoples, the Blackfeet had never learned to make a "fire-water" of their own. Their rapid decline in physique and morals is easily traceable to the introduction of the fire-water and to its vendors.

It is pleasing indeed to notice the strong desire that exists among the older and some of the younger Blackfeet for the abolishment of the liquor traffic, and their truest friends are cordially supporting them.

The Blackfoot in his primitive condition was a naturally religious being. All nature was alive to him. He saw in the Sun the Creator of the universe, and he addressed it as "Na-pi," or "Old-Man;" he prayed also to the moon, to certain of



Blackfoot Indian, 1870



Birdseye View of Gleichen



C. Stafford

Blackfoot Indian, 1920

the planets; to mother-earth. Certain of the birds and animals were likewise venerated by them, and there were times when certain of their own people were regarded with more than ordinary respect or reverence. Frequent escape from dangers, whether in war or in the chase; remarkable success as a medicine man, would lead the man's friends, and indeed the man himself, to believe that the sun had imparted to him some of his own sacred power, and he was spoken of as na-to-si-wa (he is sun-like or sacred). Sometimes he spoke of himself as ni-ta-to-si ("I am sun-like," or "I am sacred."

They prayed frequently—as often publicly as privately—but one has never heard them ask to be made good men or women, but merely for material blessings and to be kept from the influence of evil spirits.

The spring and the summer were the seasons when their chief religious festivals were held. At the opening of spring the ceremonies in connection with the ni-nams-ka-kwin-ni-man (the sacred pipe) and the na-to-yin-si-man (the sacred seed) are held, but are of short duration.

The principal festival is the Sun-dance, which is dependent upon a previous vow made in time of sickness by the sufferer, or a relative or friend, or it may be the medicine man who makes the vow on condition of recovery. The leading spirit in

the Sun-dance is always a woman, who acts as the high priestess in the not-altogether-bloodless ceremonies. Until about thirty-four years ago the making of braves was a regular part of the proceedings, but was stopped by order of the government on account of the cruelties practised.

Originally the Sun-dance festival lasted a month or six weeks. Whatever it may have been formerly, the modern sun-dance has a very baneful influence.

A word should be added as to the medicine-man and his influence. There are medicine-men and medicine-men, just as there are doctors and doctors amongst ourselves. The much-sought-after medicine-man in earlier days seems to have known his business fairly well. He may or may not have dreamed of certain herbs which were good for some particular ailment, but he certainly had a good knowledge of herbs in general, and their uses, and showed considerable common sense in the use of counter-irritants. They seem to have had no difficulty in dealing successfully with dislocations and fractures. But frequently, when the patient was considered beyond their skill, they resorted to their sacred powers and tried conjuring, and thus persuaded the patient that he had been injured by a spirit, who had shot a poisoned dart into him. The skilled medicine-man would claim to have extracted this and would assure the patient of instant recovery. Sometimes the ruse

worked, but sometimes it didn't. Meanwhile the able doctor had received his fee and was busy elsewhere.

Rather less than ten years later the life of centuries began to completely change for the Blackfeet, as for other Indian tribes.

The buffalo had gradually disappeared, owing chiefly to the almost reckless killing that took place merely to secure sufficient hides for purpose of barter with the various fur traders of those days. About that time the building of the C.P.R. was projected, and those in power felt the need of settling Indians on prescribed reservations. Negotiations were entered into between the Dominion Government and the Blackfeet, whereby the latter agreed to surrender to the Crown their rights to all other lands over which they had roamed for centuries, and to confine themselves to a limited sphere on the banks of the Bow river, and stretching from about Bassano on the east to Namaka on the west. The boundaries of this reserve have, with their consent and in consideration of a suitable compensation, been twice re-adjusted; once when the C.P.R. was being constructed, so as to allow all lands north of the track being Crown lands; and later (about nine years ago) when they sold a three-mile strip from end to end on the south side of the Bow river. On the former occasion an equivalent in land was given them on their southern boundary; and on the other, the cash proceeds of the sale were paid into their tribal funds at Ottawa, and gave them an investment which secured for them not only beef, flour and tea, but farms, dwellings and other buildings, and every requirement for successful farming.

The sudden change from an active, roaming life, dependent upon their own energies entirely for their means of existence, and controlled by unwritten laws in which there was little of sentiment, to a very restricted life in which there was little or no scope for the habits of the past and in which their dwellings, their clothing and their food were changed, brought about a rapid degeneration. The "noble redman" gradually lost much of his nobility; and in place of his abnormally fine physique he became only too frequently a victim of tuberculosis or other serious diseases, so that their numbers lessened rapidly.

The advent of the white man and the new mode of life was not an unmixed blessing.

In the old life they lived summer and winter in their beautiful skin teepees (new almost every

spring) and changed their encampment frequently, so that they were always living under sanitary conditions. In their new sphere they were poor, and had to be content with a very inferior substitute for their teepees and their bed-coverings, so that when winter came round they built themselves log huts, after the habit of the white men, but without windows or proper ventilation. Ten or more souls would often huddle together in one small shack.

Skin clothing, which the buffalo and the antelope provided, had to give place to blankets and prints and cotton sheeting.

The proverbially tender meat of the buffalo—"more tender than chicken"—and the various roots and herbs with which the prairies abound, had to be supplanted by cow beef and bannock, which they were unskilled in cooking, until the camps became filled with chronic dyspeptics.

Happily times and conditions changed, and the government and the church missions gripped their nettle, and by careful instruction and guidance and by providing schools and suitable dwellings with medical supervision, and plenty of work and good food, tuberculosis, which once threatened to wipe them out, is fast disappearing.

The younger men—more particularly the ex-pupils of the boarding schools—are becoming good farmers, and if only they avail themselves of their exceptionally favorable opportunities, they should become fairly wealthy in the near future. Apart from their crops they have cattle ranging on their reserve which bring to their individual owners substantial returns. A considerable portion of their income is made by freighting for settlers and others and by coal-mining on their own reserve.

Within the last forty years they have adapted themselves better than was feared to their new life and its conditions, and there is every indication that with firm but considerate supervision in work, thrift and morals they will in time become capable fellow-citizens.

They are about seven hundred in number, of whom about two-thirds have embraced the Christian faith, divided about equally between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, with the remaining one-third hovering near the border line.



O-TO-KU-I-MI-TAS,
Chief David Yellow Horse

18

**BLACKFEET WHO ARE REPRESENTING
THEIR FORMER MODE OF LIFE**



O-TO-KU-I-MI-O-TAS

David Yellow Horse (Head Chief).

A-PAU-NIS-TA

Weazle-Calf (Minor Chief and last survivor of signatories to Original Treaty).

MA-KU-YO-KI-NAS

Silas Wolf Collar (Minor Chief).

NI-NAU-KSIS-KUM

Spring Chief (Minor Chief) (= a natural spring of water).

A-KAI-YOK-SISTS

Many Goods.

SOK-KU-MA-PI-INA

Boy Chief

PI-TAI-KI-TSI-PI-MI

Spotted Eagle.

A-TIS-TA-MUK-KON

B. Running Rabbit.

O-KE-INA

W. Water Chief.

A-PO-PI-INA

A. White-haired Chief.



Let 'er Buck !

THE GLEICHEN CALL PRINT
(W. Park Evans, Proprietor)